

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE

2 NOVEMBER 2021

Report Title	PET POLICY			
Purpose of Report	Review of Pet Policy, to cover pets owned by Stroud District Council Tenants.			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to: a) Adopt the revised Pet Policy b) Give delegated authority to the Head of Housing Services, in consultation with the Chair & Vice Chair of Housing Committee to make minor amendments as necessary			
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation has taken place with Involved Tenants, Animal Welfare and other Officers			
Report Author	Michelle Elliott – Housing Manager michelle.elliott@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	N/A			
Background Papers	N/A			
Appendices	Appendix A – Pet Policy Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	Yes	No

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A pet policy allowing tenants in all properties to keep pets was originally approved by Housing Committee in 2013 and this was seen as an innovative way forward and praised by the Cats Protection League.
- 1.2 Stroud District Council was commended for its “responsible and reasonable” request that pets should be microchipped, vaccinated and neutered, “which has helped prevent problems with multi-cat households and stray/feral cat colonies. In the words of the Cats Protection League, Stroud District Council was named a ‘purrfect landlord’

1.3 Previous to this our existing policy ignored the obvious benefits of pet ownership, particularly in tackling social isolation and improving mental health.

2.0 Feedback

2.1 Some of the concerns that have been raised by tenants since our last review in 2019 have included:

- Significant noise from cockerels
- Multi pet households
- Dogs loose in communal areas
- Fouling in communal areas

3.0 Key changes to the policy include:

3.1 Permission to house cockerels has been withdrawn.

3.2 The breeding and sale of animals from SDC properties has been prohibited.

3.3 This policy has also addressed the fact that permissions to have a pet can be withdrawn if the pet criteria is breached.

3.4 It has been highlighted that permissions will not be given to house a caged pet on communal land.

4.0 Pet Permissions addressed

4.1 A number has not been considered for a multi pet household. The number of permissions will be subject to the pets being looked after in a suitable environment for their needs.

4.2 Dogs loose in communal areas and fouling in communal areas is a concern and this will be addressed with permissions being withdrawn for repeat offenders.

4.3 Tenants will be reminded that they need to seek permission before homing a new pet and in particular discussing with tenants the need to have a named person responsible for their pet if they are absent.

5.0 Cat Flaps

5.1 Cat flaps continue to be raised as a concern by tenants as our current policy does not allow cat flaps in our properties as the integrity of the door can be compromised if a cat flap is installed.

5.2 A survey monkey on Facebook, debating a change in policy and the option to cover the cost of a new door when tenants moved was responded to by 38 tenants, 31 of who requested a change of policy, however only 16 would consider paying for a new door when they moved. Given that the response was relatively low the current policy of refusing permission for cat flaps will stand.

6.0 Evictions & Abandonments

6.1 Consideration has been given for pets left in a property during an eviction and of a property and pet that has been abandoned, should this be the case and there is no one responsible for the pet then Housing Services will take responsibility and arrange appropriate action.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

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7.2 Legal Implications

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 applies to the Council as it does to any other landlord of residential property. Insofar as the keeping of pets is concerned, the effect of this Act is to apply a requirement that any contractual provision must be fair; terms that are deemed to be unfair are not binding on the tenant. Whilst some terms are automatically deemed to be unfair (e.g. excluding liability in the event of death or personal injury), most are subject to an objective test, bearing in mind all the circumstances of the contract. In any event, the Council, as a local authority, is under a general obligation to act reasonably

When considering pets and property, it would be reasonable and fair to consider the type of pet, personal circumstances (e.g. whether the animal is an assistance animal), the type and location of the property, and the conditions imposed.

The Government has recently issued a Model Tenancy Agreement for Assured Shorthold Tenancies: this document may be considered as being the benchmark for assessing whether or not terms in residential tenancy agreements are fair. Of particular relevance to this report, the Model Tenancy does not impose a blanket ban on keeping pets. Instead:

- The landlord's prior written consent is required, which must not be unreasonably withheld or delayed (28 days is the period allowed);
- Consent should be given where the landlord is satisfied that the tenant is a responsible pet owner and the pet is of a kind that is suitable in relation to the nature of the premises at which it can be kept
- The landlord cannot charge a fee for granting consent.

The proposed Policy would appear to accord with the spirit of the Model Tenancy.

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7.3 Equality Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and found in Appendix B.

7.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.